Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water

PTBT/CONF/SR.4
4 February 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at United Nations Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 9 January 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia)

CONTENTS

Observer status

General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

91-55035 3456S (E)

/...

READEX FICHE

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

OBSERVER STATUS

1. The PRESIDENT said that the Secretary-General of the Conference had received requests for Observer status at the Conference from Angola and Vanuatu in pursuance of rule 44 (2) (a) of the rules of procedure. The Secretary-General of the Conference had also received a request for Observer status at the Conference from Palestine in pursuance of rule 44 (2) (b) of the rules of procedure. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the participants in the Conference agreed to grant Observer status to Angola, Vanuatu and Palestine.

2. It was so decided.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

3. Mr. PENNANEACH (Togo) said that the Amendment Conference was important first of all because of the urgent need to strive tirelessly to create a world free of the spectre of the destruction of civilization. Ensuring international peace and security required co-ordinated efforts at the national, bilateral, regional and international level in order to promote general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. In that connection, any initiative that helped to halt the arms race and bring about nuclear disarmament should be given proper attention.

4. The Amendment Conference not only demonstrated the commitment of its initiators to the spirit and letter of the 1963 Moscow Treaty, but also reflected the profound concern of the international community at the continuation of nuclear testing and also its growing material interest in an immediate halt to the arms race.

5. In the preamble to the Treaty, its original parties had proclaimed their commitment to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time, their determination to continue negotiations to that end and their desire to halt the radioactive contamination of the environment. The fact that 118 States were parties to the Treaty undoubtedly served as clear evidence of the commitment of States to halting the nuclear-arms race and to the gradual and complete cessation of nuclear tests. Nevertheless, contemporary policy for ensuring security had not made it possible to realize the hope linked to that international document for a slow-down in the nuclear-arms race - after the signing of the Treaty, the number of tests had even increased. Before its signing, an average of 30 tests had been conducted annually, while in the period afterwards the number had increased to 48. The fact that 85 per cent of all tests were being conducted by the three original parties to the Treaty was also noteworthy.

6. Furthermore, by means of testing and stepped-up scientific research in the military field nuclear weapons were being qualitatively improved, making it possible to modernize nuclear warheads and, in particular, reduce their size and weight in absolute terms and increase strike accuracy and reliability.

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

7. Transforming the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty seemed to be necessary in view of the following four reasons: there was an urgent need to ensure strict compliance with the spirit and letter of the Treaty and strengthen the non-proliferation régime; the countries of the world had an increasing material interest in a comprehensive nuclear-test ban; the technical means for verification were available; East-West relations had considerably improved; and prospects had opened up for building a new international order based on the principles of trust, solidarity and co-operation.

8. Amending the Treaty would considerably assist efforts to halt the nuclear-arms race and prevent in a non-discriminatory way the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. The indivisible link between the obligation of some States not to acquire nuclear weapons and that of others to halt the growth and qualitative improvement of their nuclear arsenals must, first and foremost, constitute the basis for a truly reliable and effective non-proliferation régime.

9. The advent of the thermonuclear era had threatened to obliterate civilization and the problem of ensuring security had become global in nature. Henceforth, the question of halting the nuclear-arms race had constantly been the focus of attention of the States Members of the United Nations. Numerous General Assembly resolutions dealt with that question and the efforts undertaken at the Conference on Disarmament were designed to achieve that goal. Nevertheless, the growth and modernization of nuclear capabilities contradicted the noble intentions proclaimed in the Moscow Treaty concerning the cessation of nuclear-test explosions and the holding of negotiations to that end. The purpose of amending the Treaty was indeed to eliminate that contradiction.

10. Current technical verification means made it possible to register nuclear-weapon tests, as was demonstrated by the data provided in the 1990 SIPRI annual report, and opposition to an immediate and comprehensive test ban was today due more to political and military considerations, particularly adherence to the concept of nuclear deterrence. He stressed the wide-ranging possibilities for verification, which had been demonstrated during the two technical tests successfully conducted by the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts, considering measures to promote international co-operation in order to detect and identify seismic events. Increasing the number of countries participating in other technical tests would help to improve that verification method and establish a global network of seismic stations.

11. A step-by-step approach to a test ban not only did not prevent the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, but also jeopardized the multilateral negotiations on an immediate and comprehensive ban. Viewing a comprehensive test ban as a long-term goal was tantamount to ignoring the global nature of ensuring security, legitimizing the policy of nuclear deterrence and maintaining the military strategic advantage which the possession of nuclear weapons gave certain States. Such an approach was fraught with the danger of encouraging the acquisition of nuclear weapons as the ideal way to ensure security.

(Mr. Pennaneach, Togo)

12. The significant improvement in East-West relations was opening up prospects for developing and intensifying disarmament efforts. That unique opportunity should be used in order to redefine policy for ensuring security in order to adopt a defensive doctrine based on the total rejection of the policy of nuclear deterrence. It was necessary to proceed from words to deeds and make a choice in favour of amending the Moscow Treaty in order to ensure the survival of mankind.

13. Mr. HOEKEMA (Netherlands) said that his country continued to support the goal of a comprehensive test ban in accordance with the obligations under the partial test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty. Such a ban should be framed in the broader context of the process of disarmament and, in particular, nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons for years had contributed to stability and had helped prevent an East-West conflict. Even in the changed political conditions in Europe nuclear weapons could be considered a stabilizing element. That fact, however, should not preclude a substantial reduction of nuclear-weapon stocks to minimum levels. The recent successes at nuclear-arms reduction negotiations and the prospects for further reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union demonstrated that the parties concerned were on the right track.

14. A further reduction in the number of tests to a minimum level was technically feasible and politically desirable. Nevertheless, nuclear forces in their limited future role and in drastically reduced numbers would have to be kept up to date. That might imply a certain number of nuclear tests, but their number and yield should be kept to a minimum. In that context, the Netherlands called on the United States and the Soviet Union to take further steps in their phased approach to nuclear testing and start negotiations as soon as possible on effective limitations on the number of their tests.

15. While the merits of a comprehensive test ban had been studied in depth, very few publications had been devoted to the minimum level of testing required to keep nuclear weapons reliable and up to date. His delegation, therefore, would welcome a further study of the possibility of using "dry testing" procedures and, at the same time, limiting actual explosions.

16. The Netherlands continued to believe that the number of nuclear tests could and should be rapidly reduced along with further reductions in nuclear weapons. That might be a more fruitful approach to bringing about a ban on all tests, which the international community so eagerly sought. His country was fully committed to the obligations under the Treaty to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons.

17. The international community had the right to be properly informed about possible environmental and health hazards of nuclear tests.

18. Another important question concerned the way a comprehensive test ban could be verified. There was substantial evidence that underground nuclear explosions were detectable, particularly through seismic monitoring. In that regard, his

(Mr. Hoekema, Netherlands)

delegation welcomed the paper on verification drafted by Australia and New Zealand, and considered that the ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts should be encouraged.

19. His delegation hoped that the discussions at the Amendment Conference would result in increased understanding among delegations on issues where they differed. The Netherlands firmly believed that further discussions should take place in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban of the Conference on Disarmament.

20. Mr. GOLOVKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in recent years, the process of practical disarmament had gained unprecedented momentum. The Treaty between the United States and the USSR on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles was being carried out successfully, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe had been signed and a treaty between the USSR and the United States on a radical reduction of their strategic arms would be next. In such circumstances, the Soviet Union considered the achievement of a nuclear-test ban to be one of the priority goals of its foreign policy.

21. A token of the Soviet Union's unswerving policy in that area had been the appeal of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued on 9 October 1990, in which it drew the attention of parliaments and the world community to the urgent need for the prompt cessation of all nuclear tests as one of the most important measures for strengthening the régime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their destruction, and also called upon those States which were conducting nuclear-weapon tests to express their clear and unambiguous support for a complete and general cessation of nuclear tests.

22. Drawing attention to the Soviet Union's approach to possible ways of solving that problem, he said that the USSR was prepared to make use of every opportunity for a complete nuclear-weapon-test ban, which would be facilitated by constructive parallel efforts at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

23. While the ongoing Soviet-American dialogue was a step-by-step process, it nevertheless represented progress towards a final goal. In the summer of 1990, bilateral protocols to the 1974 Treaty on the Limitation of Underground Nuclear Weapon Tests (the threshold test-ban Treaty) and the 1976 Treaty on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes had been signed. After ratifying those treaties, the USSR and the United States had confirmed at the highest level their intention to adhere to their agreement to undertake negotiations on further limitations of nuclear tests with a view to their ultimate cessation. The 1974 and 1976 treaties had entered into force on 11 December 1990. Provided that its partners were also in agreement, the Soviet Union was ready to proceed, immediately after the completion of the first stage, to an agreement on the complete cessation of nuclear tests.

24. Considering the problem of nuclear tests to be transboundary, the Soviet Union fully supported multilateral steps towards the complete cessation of tests and

(Mr. Golovko, USSR)

placed great hope in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban of the Conference on Disarmament. The Amendment Conference could be an important milestone on the way to a complete test ban. The partial test-ban Treaty, to which more than 110 States had become parties, had marked the first major success in efforts to limit the nuclear-arms race. Unfortunately, two of the five nuclear Powers, China and France, had not yet acceded to it. The conclusion of the Treaty had impeded the qualitative improvement and creation of new types of nuclear weapons and had helped to strengthen the international non-proliferation régime and to improve the human environment throughout the world.

25. The Soviet Union considered that the adoption by the parties to the partial test-ban Treaty of a consensus decision on the extension of that Treaty's effect to underground nuclear tests would make it possible to achieve, in practical terms, a complete nuclear-weapon-test ban. While it was hardly realistic to expect that the current Conference would reach agreement on an amendment to the Treaty, that should not be a reason to play down its importance. The convening of the Conference had placed the need for a complete nuclear-test ban at the centre of the world community's attention and had provided an impetus for the development of specific ideas and suggestions on ways of verifying a complete nuclear-test ban.

26. Of key importance for the preparation of an international agreement in that area was the question of an effective verification mechanism. Experience gained in recent years demonstrated that it was possible to create, within sufficiently short time-limits, a verification mechanism acceptable to all parties. The Soviet Union's approach to the problem of verification had been reflected in the document entitled "Basic provisions of a treaty on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapons tests", which had been submitted for consideration to the Conference on Disarmament in 1987. In addition to the use of national technical means of verification, there were provisions for the creation of an international seismic monitoring system, the exchange of data on the radioactivity of air masses, and systematic verification by international inspectors, as well as the possibility of conducting mandatory on-site inspections upon request without the right of refusal. Both the proposals which were already before the Amendment Conference and those which would be submitted to it in the course of its work deserved very serious consideration.

27. A moratorium on nuclear tests was a very useful measure which facilitated the conclusion of a nuclear-test-ban treaty, and his delegation confirmed, once again, the Soviet Union's repeated assertions that it was ready at any time to discontinue its nuclear tests provided that the United States agreed to do likewise.

28. His delegation hoped that the Conference would provide an impetus for a rapid breakthrough which would help achieve a complete nuclear-test ban, and it was prepared to consider any constructive ideas for completing the work of the Conference.

29. Mr. SILOVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that, ever since the explosion of the first atomic bomb and the advent of the nuclear age, a comprehensive nuclear-test ban had

(Mr. Silović, Yugoslavia)

been one of mankind's most sought-after and as yet unattained goals. The first, and so far the only, successful effort to limit nuclear tests had been the partial test-ban Treaty. Since then, nuclear tests, carried out underground since that was not prohibited by the Treaty, and the nuclear-arms race had continued unabated. For the first time since its entry into force, States parties to the partial test-ban Treaty had gathered together at the Amendment Conference in order to make a contribution towards achieving the goal which had eluded them for so many years: a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

30. The very fact that the Conference had been convened was an important step forward and reflected the interest of the international community in tackling that serious problem. The results achieved so far in the bilateral negotiations on disarmament between the Soviet Union and the United States, particularly their intention to sign a treaty on strategic arms in the near future, was particularly encouraging. Equally important was the signing of the bilateral protocols to the 1974 threshhold test-ban Treaty and the 1976 Treaty on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes.

31. The consideration of disarmament problems, particularly at the multilateral level, was not an end in itself. It related to problems in many other areas of international life, and the emerging new world order would be long in coming if disarmament problems were left unattended. The central issue was the question of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban. In the opinion of his delegation, the conclusion of a treaty on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban would consolidate the international non-proliferation régime and would virtually preclude vertical or horizontal proliferation.

32. The partial test-ban Treaty was one of the rare treaties which had been concluded for an indefinite period and for which no regular review conferences were held. The Amendment Conference was therefore also a useful opportunity to exchange views on a number of other pertinent issues, in particular the issue of verification. In the opinion of his delegation, the amending of the partial test-ban Treaty should be accompanied by a systematic exchange of views on the problem of verification, so that the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty would help bring about a complex system of verification under effective international control. The United Nations was well equipped to make that happen. All nuclear-weapon States must become parties to the test-ban treaty and the resultant system of verification.

33. The holding of the Conference was not limited to the amendment of a disarmament treaty; it should also provide a fresh impetus to the overall efforts of the international community to ban nuclear-weapon tests. The Conference could also be of great importance to the progress of the negotiations which were being conducted within the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

34. The threat to use nuclear weapons again had never been removed. The only way and the first step to eliminate that threat was the adoption of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

35. Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Amendment Conference was taking place in a changing world situation. Positive developments in the relationship between East and West, marked by the reunification of Germany and the proclamation upon the conclusion of the negotiations within the CSCE of the Paris charter, were opening up highly promising vistas.

36. Unfortunately, the process of limiting arms and of disarmament had still not struck deep roots in many parts of the world. Clear evidence of that was the concentration of sophisticated weapons systems, including weapons of mass destruction, in volatile areas, specifically in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.

37. One of the central issues on the disarmament agenda was the cessation of nuclear-weapon tests. The existence of an indissoluble link between nuclear-test explosions and the development of nuclear weapons could not be doubted. His delegation was convinced that, in order to remove the threat of nuclear weapons and to stop the qualitative improvement and build-up of nuclear stockpiles, it was absolutely essential to supplement the partial test-ban Treaty with a ban on underground testing, which must be preceded by the discontinuance of all nuclear-test explosions. A comprehensive test ban could be an important measure for ensuring the vertical and horizontal non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

38. The three depositaries of the partial test-ban Treaty had undertaken an obligation to achieve the discontinuance of all nuclear-test explosions for ever. They had proclaimed as their main purpose the speediest possible achievement of an agreement on general and complete disarmament. Experience showed, however, that nuclear Powers that had signed the partial test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty were not fulfilling their commitments and as a result were helping to intensify the nuclear-arms race and the accumulation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

39. To expect to achieve genuine progress in the elimination of nuclear weapons was unrealistic at a time when nuclear-test explosions continued unabated. The unbridled build-up of nuclear arsenals must be halted. The most basic measure for the purpose was a comprehensive nuclear-test ban. The succcessful conclusion of the current Conference would be the best way to achieve that lofty goal and might significantly enhance the effectiveness of the non-proliferation Treaty. Discussions within the framework of the Conference might also represent a prelude for the reassessment of nuclear doctrines.

40. In conclusion, he expressed the sincere hope that the participants in the Conference would succeed in achieving unity of will between the non-nuclear States and the nuclear Powers.

41. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the current Conference was taking place at a time of major changes in the world: the cold war was virtually over; the United States and the Soviet Union had reached agreement on a substantial reduction of their conventional armaments in Europe; German unification had been achieved; and some regional conflicts were gradually responding to attempts at a peaceful

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

solution. At the same time, one could not ignore the major political, economic and regional contradictions that might frustrate efforts to create a new world.

42. In looking back at the developments since the signing of the partial test-ban Treaty the conclusion was inescapable that the expectations of mankind had not been fulfilled. The goal of a comprehensive test ban was still not within reach and the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States were far larger than they had been in 1963. The question of a nuclear-test ban remained the most pressing item on the disarmament agenda. There was no need to remind anyone that such a ban would be another step towards nuclear disarmament: it would stop the development of new and more sophisticated nuclear weapons, impede their acquisition by other countries and, most important of all, would help protect the environment for future generations.

43. For a long time the main problem in the negotiations had been verification. There were no longer any technical or scientific obstacles to a verifiable ban. It was possible to identify nuclear explosions of even less than one kiloton.

44. Some nuclear States claimed that tests were necessary for as long as nuclear deterrence was one of the corner-stones of their defence policy. The banning of nuclear tests would in no way diminish the value of deterrence; it would do no more than prevent the qualitative improvement of existing nuclear weapons. The reluctance to discuss the problem of banning tests might possibly be explained by the wish to retain technological superiority.

45. A comprehensive test-ban treaty was closely linked to the non-proliferation régime. Pakistan was convinced that the proliferation of nuclear weapons among other States would still further undermine international security.

46. Nuclear disarmament was a global problem but it also had regional dimensions. He noted in that connection the recent agreement between Argentina and Brazil to protect their region from the risk of the introduction of nuclear weapons and to create an atmosphere of mutual trust in the nuclear field. Pakistan had put forward a number of initiatives in that field, including a proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia and the convening of a conference on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia. Pakistan also remained ready to make a joint declaration with India renouncing the acquisition or manufacture of nuclear weapons.

47. The partial test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty had raised hopes for the discontinuance of all nuclear-test explosions. Until a comprehensive test-ban treaty was concluded, the nuclear-weapon States must, obviously, be asked to declare a moratorium on nuclear testing, including so-called peaceful nuclear explosions.

48. Mr. PAWLAK (Poland) said that nuclear weapons constituted a threat to all States and peoples and that for that reason the problem of nuclear weapons must be solved at the multilateral level. That, of course, did not mean that bilateral

(Mr. Pawlak, Poland)

agreements had no role to play. On the contrary, the recent agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union established a solid basis for future negotiations in broader areas of disarmament. The remarkable improvement of the international climate eliminated the very need for weapons of mass destruction.

49. Poland had repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and had initiated a proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Europe. It was firmly convinced that the non-proliferation Treaty was still the main instrument for reducing the nuclear threat and facilitating the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

50. The question of a comprehensive test ban was of extreme importance in the field of nuclear disarmament. His country felt that the path to such a treaty lay through unanimity of action by the States depositaries of the 1963 Treaty. The Conference's main task was to stimulate negotiations between those States.

51. The problem of verifying compliance with a future treaty was undoubtedly a complex one, and his country's Government had submitted to the secretariat of the Conference its detailed views on the subject. In its opinion, verification of compliance with a nuclear-test ban depended mainly on international co-operation, and hence, on the political atmosphere among the States that had established a given system of verification. His Government felt that bilateral agreements on verification could not replace a multilateral agreement. A truly comprehensive system of verification must be based on widespread dissemination of appropriate technology and expertise. States interested in a comprehensive test ban should take a more active part in preparing a global network for seismic monitoring. Besides seismic monitoring, other possible means of verification of compliance with a future treaty must also be examined, and the United Nations must play a specific role in doing that endeavour.

52. Mr. NYAKYI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that although efforts to convert the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty had begun some six years previously, the international campaign for a comprehensive test-ban treaty had begun far earlier still. An understanding of the efforts of past years would make it possible better to evaluate the historical significance of the current initiative, and especially of the Amendment Conference. As already noted, the Conference was the culmination of six years of efforts by the non-nuclear States and the international community as a whole. The partial test-ban Treaty, which the participants in the Conference sought to amend, had been in force for 27 years already. Very few disarmament issues had been the subject of such persistent attention and debate on the part of the international community as the campaign for a comprehensive test-ban treaty. At the same time, however, the world had also witnessed inconclusive negotiations and partial agreements that in effect had legitimized the continued nuclear testing and plunged the world into a spiralling nuclear-arms race.

53. The partial test-ban Treaty had always been regarded as an interim measure. The idea of preparing a further treaty had matured a long time ago. Article 1 (b)

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic of Tanzania

of the partial test-ban Treaty required all parties to the Treaty to seek to extend the ban to underground nuclear testing, and the preamble expressed their determination to continue negotiations to that end. Thus the obligation of Member States to work for a comprehensive test-ban treaty within the context of the partial test-ban Treaty needed no confirmation. Yet, the nuclear Powers had done little to fulfil that obligation.

54. The same applied to their obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty concluded in 1968. Article VI of that Treaty provided for the negotiation at an early date of measures to end the arms race. There was an undeniable link between the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty and a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Even if the provisions of the treaties did not establish such a link, it was obvious that it would be a contradiction to prevent one form of proliferation while tolerating another form.

55. Moreover, two nuclear-weapon States had not honoured their obligations under their own bilateral treaties. Both the threshold test-ban Treaty and the Treaty on Underground Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes committed the contracting parties to work for the cessation of underground nuclear explosions using a step-by-step approach. Many parties had never regarded those agreements as measures leading to the discontinuance of nuclear testing. By legitimizing nuclear testing, they undermined efforts to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty instead of facilitating them. As far as the threshold test-ban Treaty was concerned, there was no evidence of any movement towards agreement on yields below 150 kilotons.

56. A number of positive developments in the past few years had given reason for hope that renewed efforts in the field of disarmament could help to halt and reverse the arms race. At the same time, despite the improved international climate, a comprehensive test ban, which had rightly been characterized as a litmus test of the commitment of the nuclear Powers to meaningful nuclear disarmament negotiations, remained a distant goal. To persuade them to move in that direction, it had therefore become imperative for the world community to initiate multilateral negotiations on such a treaty. That again underlined the significance of the Conference.

57. The role of public opinion could not be overemphasized. In that context his delegation paid special tribute to the non-governmental organizations for waging a relentless campaign to sensitize world public opinion to the urgent need for a comprehensive test ban. Their actions had undoubtedly helped to increase the world community's awareness and had helped to draw attention to the problems posed by nuclear weapons.

58. The international community had been trying to conclude a comprehensive test-ban treaty for 27 years already. It would be self-delusion to expect that it could be achieved at the current Conference. Nevertheless, with the necessary political will, the goal could be achieved in the not-too-distant future. No

(Mr. Nyakyi, United Republic
of Tanzania

single treaty or agreement had been concluded in one meeting. The current conference should be viewed as the start of a process of serious negotiations to achieve a comprehensive test ban.

59. Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia) said that the Conference was taking place at a time of rapid and fundamental changes that were transforming the global political and economic landscape and ushering in a new phase in international relations. Concurrently, the easing of East-West tensions and of ideological struggle had opened up new possibilities for progress in arms limitation and disarmament.

60. It should not be forgotten, however, that the production of weapons of great destructive force and the modernization and re-equipment of armed forces continued unabated, thereby undermining world stability. The international community's preoccupation with the qualitative aspects of the arms race had been fully reflected in more than 70 General Assembly resolutions on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. When the partial test-ban Treaty had been signed in 1963, it had been hailed as an event ushering in a promising era of concrete nuclear-arms limitations. Even though the inclusion in the Treaty of provisions for the discontinuance of underground nuclear tests had proved elusive at that time, its preamble had affirmed the determination of the States parties to continue negotiations to conclude a comprehensive test-ban agreement. Later that provision had been reiterated in the preamble to the non-proliferation Treaty.

61. However, the nuclear Powers had continued to conduct tests. There had been a dramatic increase in the number of warheads, and the improvement in means of delivery and the development of new nuclear weapons systems had continued. The test-ban issue had therefore been accorded priority in all four review conferences on the non-proliferation Treaty. It was pertinent to note that the trilateral negotiations between the depositary States that were held in 1977-1980 had achieved progress in several crucial respects, but those talks had been suspended and had still not been resumed.

62. In the Conference on Disarmament, serious and substantive negotiations had been held in abeyance by contrived obstacles. In the bilateral negotiations a partial approach to the question of a test ban had been stressed. The signing of the INF Treaty had been welcomed as the beginning of a process of fulfilling the obligations undertaken in article VI of the non-proliferation Treaty, but those who had hoped for significant cuts in existing or planned strategic weapons or even for a slowdown in the introduction of new and more dangerous technologies had little grounds for optimism. Even after the scheduled signing in the following month of an agreement on a 30 per cent reduction of strategic weapons, the two major Powers would still have many more such weapons than they had in 1963 and 1970 when the partial test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty had gone into effect.

63. That lack of progress could be ascribed to the failure of the depositary States to fulfil their obligations. The non-nuclear-weapon States were concerned that the weapons of the future would be more potent and less verifiable and that

(Mr. Sutresna, Indonesia)

they would also complicate the conclusion of future accords. Hence the cessation of nuclear-weapon testing was an essential step to prevent the emergence of a new generation of weapons systems and its horizontal and vertical proliferation.

64. From the perspective of the developing countries, the continuing arms race exacerbated their plight because the continuation of the qualitative or quantitative arms race undermined the prospects for the economic well-being of their peoples. In addition, vast resources were being diverted at a time when they were most needed for development purposes.

65. His delegation believed that the dramatic changes in East-West relations and the progress achieved in the treaties on INF, strategic offensive arms and conventional forces in Europe were creating favourable circumstances for ending the arms race. Continued testing and the development of new weapons systems could reverse the positive trends of recent years and exacerbate the nuclear threat. To solve the problem of verification, which had become technically feasible, it was necessary to supplement the national technical means of test-ban verification with an international exchange of seismic data and to establish a network of seismic stations that would vastly improve existing verification capabilities. Hence the cessation of nuclear-weapon testing by all States had become a compelling objective that could brook no further delay. That goal could be achieved, not by a step-by-step approach, but only by a comprehensive one.

66. Indonesia had long ago joined other States in condemning nuclear explosions and calling for their total ban. It was one of the organizers of the Amendment Conference. Because of its global significance and the need for universal support, the question should be dealt with in a multilateral context. The convening of the current Conference was therefore a momentous landmark on the long road towards a global nuclear-test ban. For the first time, States parties to a nuclear-arms treaty had initiated multilateral negotiations for the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. The outcome of those negotiations would predetermine future prospects for disarmament and security.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water

PTBT/CONF/SR.5
23 January 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: RUSSIAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at United Nations Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 10 January 1991, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia)

CONTENTS

General debate (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

Any corrections to the record of this meeting and of other meetings will be issued in a corrigendum.

91-55040 3428S (E)

/...

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. HAYES (Ireland) said his Government believed that the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty was an urgent necessity. That was because of its view that true security could not be based on mutual fear deriving from military rivalry. In order to change that situation, there must be an approach to security based on the building of confidence among nations and the removal of the fear of attack. In that context, the elimination of nuclear weapons was of primary importance.

2. Recent developments in international relations, especially the relaxation of East-West tensions, seemed to indicate that the potential offered by a co-operative approach to security was increasingly being recognized. In the European context, the signing of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe at the Paris Summit Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in November 1990, the unprecedented agreement on the reduction of conventional armed forces in Europe, and the package of security- and confidence-building measures presented to the Summit Meeting provided good examples of such a co-operative approach to security.

3. The world now had a unique opportunity to move away from an approach to security based on nuclear deterrence. His delegation considered that at the present juncture in international relations, the arguments in favour of a comprehensive test-ban treaty were particularly compelling and relevant. Firstly, a comprehensive test-ban treaty was the most important step required to halt the qualitative nuclear-arms race, in other words, the development of new and more destructive weapons. While the quantitative growth in the nuclear arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States had apparently halted, qualitative development of those weapons and of their delivery vehicles was continuing and could continue under the terms of the START Treaty. Secondly, it had to be admitted that there were no grounds for arguing that testing of nuclear weapons was necessary to ensure their continued reliability, for their reliability could be ensured without recourse to further testing. Thirdly, the problem of ensuring reliable verification, which had been presented as an obstacle to the negotiation of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, was no longer insoluble.

4. The Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events was carrying out extremely useful work on the development of an international seismic monitoring network. Other verification techniques, such as satellite photography, monitoring of airborne radioactive materials and hydrodynamic measurement, had been identified as measures which would contribute to the development of confidence in a comprehensive test-ban treaty. The draft verification protocol circulated by the sponsors of the amendment proposal also emphasized on-site inspection.

5. Fourthly, a comprehensive test-ban treaty would provide a real barrier to the further horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as to the proliferation

(Mr. Hayes, Ireland)

of more sophisticated and destructive thermonuclear weapons, which could not be developed without testing. In that context, his Government believed that a halt to testing, followed by a rapid conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, would be the clearest proof which the nuclear-weapon States could offer of their commitment to complete nuclear disarmament and of their determination to control the qualitative development of the nuclear-arms race. Total prohibition of nuclear testing should be seen as the first step towards disarmament - not as the final stage, to be undertaken only after the other elements of disarmament had been agreed. A universal production cut-off in weapons-grade fissionable material was also required.

6. The key question at the current Conference was how a comprehensive test-ban treaty could best be achieved. His delegation believed that the Conference on Disarmament was the best forum for discussion of that issue. All the nuclear-weapon States participated in the Conference on Disarmament, although all were not parties to the partial test-ban Treaty. However, discussions in the current Amendment Conference and in the Conference on Disarmament did not have to be mutually exclusive. The current Conference could give an impetus to the work under way in the Conference on Disarmament, and could undertake useful work on the verification issue, in particular by considering and refining, if necessary, the draft verification protocol submitted by the sponsors of the amendment.

7. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria) said that the conclusion of the partial nuclear-test-ban Treaty in 1963 had been a step forward in arms-control and disarmament efforts. In the assessment of the general framework of the Treaty régime, one had to bear in mind that the Treaty limited itself to the prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests or any other nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, including the territorial waters and the high seas. Nuclear tests or explosions in any other environment were prohibited only if they caused radioactive debris to be present outside the territorial limits of the State under whose jurisdiction or control such explosions were conducted. The limits of the existing régime were obvious. No verification provisions were incorporated. Furthermore, at the time of the conclusion of the Treaty, agreement had not been reached on the prohibition of underground testing or on verification, because the then prevailing environmental interests had been limited to above-ground testing. In addition, no quantitative or qualitative thresholds for permissible nuclear testing had been adopted. Such shortcomings in the partial test-ban Treaty clearly showed the need for a more elaborate and comprehensive system in order to deal with all related problems.

8. Major progress could be achieved in the framework of the Group of Scientific Experts, which had been established in 1976, to deal with the technical aspects of verification and the feasibility of a global seismological monitoring network to detect any major underground tremors. Such a monitoring system would constitute the corner-stone of the verification régime of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. The re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban at the Conference on Disarment was also an encouraging sign for the possible early conclusion of such a treaty.

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

9. The halting of nuclear-weapon tests in the context of non-proliferation was another important issue to be dealt with. In that regard, the recent Fourth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons demonstrated the close relationship between the two subjects, even though divergent positions with regard to a comprehensive test-ban treaty had made it impossible to reach agreement on a final document. Since nuclear-weapon testing was mainly related to the modernization of nuclear weapons, the complete halting of all nuclear tests would bring about a major breakthrough in efforts to stop the nuclear-arms race and promote vertical and horizontal non-proliferation. The question of halting nuclear-weapon tests should also be considered in the wider framework of general and complete disarmament.

10. The current Conference provided the opportunity to review the functioning of the partial test-ban Treaty and draw conclusions about a future comprehensive régime. It could also make a political contribution to efforts to achieve a comprehensive test ban and promote greater awareness of that issue on the part of the international community. In that context, his delegation welcomed the participation of the large number of non-governmental organizations at the Conference. Lastly, the Amendment Conference should elaborate concrete proposals for consideration by the Conference on Disarmament. The political will to solve outstanding verification-related questions would be of great importance. That was especially true for the consideration of concrete questions concerning the overall pattern of verification and the interrelationship between its different aspects, such as the global seismological network, exchange of information, on-site inspection, technical means of verification and so forth. In order to ensure the effective implementation of the future comprehensive test-ban treaty, improved international co-operation and adequate financial means were necessary. Consultations with States which were not parties to the Treaty should be intensified in order to ensure universal adherence to the partial test-ban Treaty and the future comprehensive test-ban treaty. In that connection, the Conference on Disarmament should redouble its efforts to resolve the outstanding issues.

11. Mr. AKSIN (Turkey) said that the Amendment Conference was taking place at a time of dramatic transformations in the international political arena. The momentous developments in Europe had fundamentally changed the nature of East-West relations. That in turn had created a political environment conducive to progress in the field of arms control and disarmament. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, signed in Paris in November 1990, and the new set of confidence- and security-building measures adopted at the CSCE Paris Summit had laid the foundation for a new era of co-operation in a region extending from the Atlantic to the Urals. In the field of nuclear disarmament, the historic INF Treaty was expected to be complemented shortly by the START Agreement, which would entail significant reductions in the strategic nuclear arsenals of the two major nuclear-weapon States. In that context, the Geneva negotiations on a global and complete ban on chemical weapons were of utmost importance.

12. With regard to the issue of a nuclear-test ban, his delegation shared the view that progress in the various fields of disarmament would contribute to the eventual

(Mr. Aksin, Turkey)

achievement of a comprehensive test ban. His country viewed disarmament as an integrated process encompassing multiple interrelated elements, including nuclear, conventional and chemical weapons, together with the necessary verification mechanisms and confidence- and security-building measures.

13. Turkey supported the goal of halting all nuclear-weapon tests for all time and noted with satisfaction that the Conference on Disarmament at its 1990 summer session had reached agreement on a mandate for the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban. His delegation looked forward to the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee at the beginning of the 1991 session of the Conference on Disarmament. The Ad Hoc Committee had to carry out substantive work on issues related to a comprehensive test ban, inter alia, the vital question of verification and compliance. He also wished to pay tribute to the Group of Scientific Experts, which had achieved considerable progress towards the establishment of a global network for the monitoring and exchange of seismic data. The network would be an important element in the future verification system of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

14. He hoped that at the current Conference there would be a constructive exchange of views on various aspects of the test-ban issue, which would make it possible to focus attention on the search for mutually acceptable solutions, rather than on the differences which existed among the States parties to the partial test-ban Treaty.

15. Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia) said that the Amendment Conference was being conducted at a time marked by the end of the "cold war" and the strengthening of détente and sincerely hoped that the spirit of co-operation, which had led to considerable progress in the field of disarmament and arms control both on a bilateral and a multilateral basis, would also be reflected in the work of the Conference and make it possible to achieve positive results.

16. It would hardly have been possible to conclude the 1963 Moscow Treaty, if the non-nuclear-weapon countries, particularly the non-aligned ones, had not called for a nuclear test ban. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to achieve a complete ban at that time and, furthermore, the Treaty had not provided for verification measures which would ensure its implementation. As a result, underground nuclear explosions continued to be conducted: according to data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, since the signing of the Treaty 1,237 underground tests had been carried out, not to mention undeclared or unregistered explosions. In addition, 64 nuclear tests in the atmosphere had been registered.

17. Today, as never in the past, all States must demonstrate political will and seriously undertake the building of a non-violent world, free of nuclear weapons. As early as 1972, the Secretary-General, on the basis of a detailed analysis of the scientific and technical aspects of the problem of nuclear-weapon tests, had expressed confidence that a political decision would suffice in order to ban them definitively. Subsequently, the Secretary-General had repeatedly pointed out that the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty would constitute convincing proof of a real desire for nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

18. In the view of specialists in the field of disarmament, existing technical possibilities made it feasible to halt nuclear tests in the atmosphere and replace them with laboratory tests. In that connection, it was becoming a matter of priority to step up negotiations aimed at a complete test ban, which would be a significant obstacle to both the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons and help strengthen the Treaty itself.

19. It should be stressed that in a world dedicated to the philosophy of equitable relations among States, the continued possession of nuclear weapons by some of them inevitably motivated others to follow their example. At the same time, it was common knowledge that when there were gigantic arsenals of both nuclear and conventional weapons, no State would be able to escape the terrible consequences resulting from their use. Accordingly, the very survival of mankind increasingly depended on speedy general and complete disarmament.

20. The vicious circle of conducting tests to verify the reliability of nuclear weapons was completed with the development of new, improved, more destructive and more lethal types of nuclear weapons. A comprehensive nuclear-test ban in all environments therefore would be a way of depriving States of the possibility of verifying the quality of their arsenals and would significantly lessen the desire of non-nuclear-weapon States to acquire such weapons.

21. Environmental pollution resulting from nuclear tests was also a cause of great concern for all mankind. Over the course of many years, the countries of Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America had advocated declaring their regions nuclear-weapon-free zones. At its forty-fifth session, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution prohibiting the dumping of toxic and radioactive wastes on the African continent, which demonstrated the extreme importance attached to the link between ensuring disarmament and environmental protection.

22. The reduced tension in East-West relations was today opening up new opportunities for taking political and diplomatic measures aimed at ensuring the security of the countries that ranked low in the hierarchy of military strength. His delegation considered that a comprehensive nuclear-test ban was an important integral part of the general process of arms limitation and disarmament and hoped that the current Conference would help promote constructive dialogue and mutual understanding, leading to the adoption of the proposed amendment to the Treaty.

23. Mr. RANA (Nepal) said that the current Conference was taking place at a decisive moment in the history of international relations. The "cold war" had finally come to an end and a new international order was being established. There was reason to hope that the issues of international peace, security and stability would now be pursued democratically and with a global perspective. The INF Treaty, prospects for the conclusion of an agreement on significant reductions in the strategic offensive weapons of the two super-Powers, the recently concluded agreement on conventional forces in Europe, the strengthening of the CSCE process, the rejection of a doctrinaire approach to relations between States and the growing tide of pluralism had reinforced hopes for a stable and democratic world order.

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

The Amendment Conference was providing yet another historic opportunity to strengthen the process of building a safer and more peaceful world.

24. An equitable international security system could be predicated only on the cessation of the nuclear-arms race and the elimination of nuclear weapons. The adoption of measures to halt the qualitative improvement and development of new systems of nuclear weapons and prevent their proliferation would be the first steps towards that goal. With that in mind, a majority of the members of the international community had, for more than three decades, been pursuing the goal of a comprehensive treaty on the complete prohibition of all nuclear-weapon tests in all environments. The 1963 partial test-ban Treaty had been the first global step towards nuclear disarmament. One should not, however, forget that that Treaty set forth the obligations of the nuclear-weapon States parties to seek to achieve a comprehensive test ban and continue negotiations to that end. It was therefore difficult to understand why after almost three decades of trilateral and bilateral negotiations, some major Powers were now speaking of a comprehensive test ban only as a long-term objective. The failure to make any progress towards a comprehensive test ban clearly jeopardized the future of the non-proliferation Treaty. That was clear from the results of the Fourth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1990.

25. He expressed deep gratitude to non-governmental organizations around the world. Their valuable work had created a well-informed public opinion on the need to achieve a comprehensive test ban at an early date.

26. His delegation welcomed the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban at the Conference on Disarmament in 1990. He earnestly hoped that the Conference on Disarmament would once again establish the Ad Hoc Committee in 1991 with a clear negotiating mandate.

27. The question of reliable verification had long held up negotiations in that field. Nevertheless, the results of studies by experts had conclusively established that the lack of credible verification techniques for a comprehensive test ban was no longer an impediment. The Group of Scientific Experts at the Conference on Disarmament had carried out important work in that regard.

28. The pursuit of a comprehensive test ban in a multilateral forum in no way diminished the importance of the bilateral negotiations that had already produced very important results. The ratification of the verification protocols to the threshold test-ban Treaty and the peaceful nuclear explosions Treaty had established the technical possibility of verification. Furthermore, the six initiators of the Amendment Conference as well as Australia and New Zealand had put forward proposals for consideration by the participants in the Conference. Those proposals deserved careful study.

29. The question of a comprehensive test ban was immensely complex and touched on the fundamental security perceptions of some States. His delegation also believed that the end of the cold war called for a new thinking and for greater willingness

(Mr. Rana, Nepal)

to compromise. As a firm supporter of the early conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, Nepal believed that the current Conference offered yet another necessary forum to examine the issue in all its aspects. While it would not be realistic to expect to achieve a comprehensive test ban in two weeks, the current Conference could be made an integral part of the ongoing efforts at various levels towards the same goal. Given the political will, it would be possible, at the Conference, to agree on measures to continue negotiations.

30. Mr. ADEYEMI (Nigeria) said that by its very nature and scope, the partial test-ban Treaty had been the first real disarmament treaty. It was quite significant that the Treaty contained the commitment by the depositary Powers to seek, with maximum speed, a comprehensive test ban through further negotiations.

31. The special importance of the Amendment Conference derived not only from the unique character of adherence to the Treaty, but also from the fact that the question of a comprehensive test ban had consistently been on the agenda of the General Assembly, and of many other multilateral disarmament bodies. Nigeria hoped that the depositaries of the partial test-ban Treaty would participate constructively in the Amendment Conference.

32. The Conference reflected the failure of the three depositary Powers to live up to their obligations under the partial test-ban Treaty, the threshold test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty. It also reflected the failure of the Conference on Disarmament and bilateral, trilateral or other negotiating forums to achieve a comprehensive test ban over the years.

33. The history of the Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, reflected the many failures and the frustration over the lack of progress towards a comprehensive test ban. Even as late as July 1990, the Conference on Disarmament had established an Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, but it had failed to gain a negotiating mandate on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

34. No time was more appropriate than the present time to focus international attention on the question of a comprehensive ban on nuclear-weapon testing. Since the organizational meeting for the current Conference in June 1990, there had been a number of developments - democratic transformations in Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, the reintegration of Europe, the cessation of ideological confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the end of the cold war, and the official proclamation of a new world order.

35. Nigeria had long appreciated how valuable a nuclear-test ban would be to the peace, security and environment of poor, weak and defenceless nations. The fact that South Africa, through its acquisition of nuclear weapons, had frustrated regional efforts to make Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, further reinforced Africa's overwhelming support for the partial test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty, whose ultimate objective was the realization of a global, effective and verifiable comprehensive test ban.

(Mr. Adeyemi, Nigeria)

36. Nuclear weapons did not promote and could not guarantee any nation's security. If they did, there would be no need for the nuclear-weapon States to continue adding to the existing nuclear weapons in their arsenals. If vertical proliferation by the nuclear Powers continued, horizontal proliferation by additional States would also proceed apace, with greater threats to international security and the security of the nuclear Powers themselves.

37. Nigeria strongly believed that the unique opportunity of the favourable international climate and the end of the cold war should be seized in order to achieve a comprehensive test ban without further delay. Since the advent of nuclear weapons and the pursuit of the nuclear-arms race were products of the Second World War and its attendant cold war, the effective end of the cold war should be used to begin taking real steps towards the elimination of those weapons before the end of the century. The advantages of a comprehensive test-ban treaty within the framework of the Amendment Conference were enormous: the three Powers that were the depositaries of both the partial test-ban Treaty and the non-proliferation Treaty would be living up to their obligations; a comprehensive test-ban treaty would put an end to the discriminatory nature of the non-proliferation Treaty; it would be a decisive step towards curbing the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons; it would halt the emergence of new, third-generation nuclear weapons; it would mark an unprecedented global pronouncement on one of the most important disarmament issues of the day. In short, a comprehensive test-ban treaty would accelerate the emergence of a new world order based on common security and the abandonment of the threat or use of force in international relations, and foster disarmament measures in other key spheres, including the early multilateral prohibition of chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction.

38. His delegation had no illusion that a comprehensive test-ban treaty could be achieved during the two weeks allocated for the Amendment Conference. There were several vital questions of verification and compliance which needed to be addressed, including the structure and functions of control, institutional mechanisms, legal issues of relationships to existing treaties, review procedures, financial aspects, and the question of securing adherence of all the nuclear Powers and non-nuclear-weapon States to a comprehensive test-ban treaty. It was hardly possible to discuss all those issues in the current forum in two weeks. His delegation believed that there was an obvious need to keep the amendment initiative alive in the Conference by exercising certain options, including the establishment of a standing working group or committee that would be mandated by the Conference to continue serious negotiations after the recess. In addition, a future session of the Amendment Conference should be envisaged for the near future, possibly in 1992, in order to take stock of negotiations and give the necessary political impetus.

39. The current Conference had a duty to stand firm against any attempt, subtle or overt, to shift the focus of attention or future action to the Conference on Disarmament or any other limited negotiating forum. The Amendment Conference was the most viable negotiating forum for the achievement of a test ban. Nigeria

(Mr. Adeyemi, Nigeria)

called on the three depositary Powers to suspend all nuclear testing for the period of negotiations within the framework of the Amendment Conference, until a comprehensive test-ban treaty was concluded. It also called on the Soviet Union, which, of those three nuclear Powers, had been the leading proponent of a comprehensive test ban, to declare a unilateral moratorium on all nuclear tests from January 1991 until 1995, so as to intensify international pressure and increase the momentum for a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

40. Mr. TAYLHARDAT (Venezuela) said that at the adoption of the Moscow Treaty in 1963, the only three nuclear Powers signing the Treaty had pledged to promote the cessation of underground testing. Twenty-seven years had since elapsed, but that commitment, like others, had not yet been honoured. There had been a definite change for the better in 1977, with the achievement of an agreement in principle on a number of major issues, but in the few years since, the trilateral negotiations had come to a standstill.

41. The problem of verification had for some time constituted a major obstacle to talks. It was now known that, with the help of existing technical devices, the nature and origin of any seismic event could be ascertained with a minimum degree of error. In addition, the two major nuclear Powers had agreed to the idea of on-site inspection, which definitely meant significant progress in the elaboration of other indirect means of control and verification. The view was now being expressed that the idea of nuclear deterrence must still be retained, that tests could not be abandoned and that a comprehensive nuclear-test ban was a long-term objective which could only be achieved step by step. It was surprising that such arguments should be advanced at a time when the international situation had changed radically, when the "cold war" had given way to co-operation and mutual understanding between the super-Powers and the concept of nuclear deterrence had already lost its prior significance.

42. His country believed that the achievement of a test ban was an urgent task of paramount importance. The reasons were, firstly, that underground nuclear explosions also caused radioactive pollution of the atmosphere and, secondly, that underground testing played a considerable part in prolonging the nuclear arms race by making it possible to develop new and more effective forms of weapons. Underground nuclear tests were therefore one of the major factors behind horizontal proliferation.

43. The task of achieving a complete test ban was twofold. On the one hand, the nuclear Powers must be persuaded to change their position and to accept that testing must be stopped; on the other, it was necessary to elaborate a sufficiently effective and reliable system of verification. There could of course be no guarantee of 100-per-cent reliability, but it would be possible to establish a sufficiently effective system of verification for each country to be assured that others were also conscientiously abiding by their commitments.

44. It was essential that the current Conference should constitute a decisive step forwards on the path to achieving the desired goal. It would obviously not be

(Mr. Taylhardat, Venezuela)

possible to make any amendment to the Treaty so long as it remained necessary, to solve a whole array of complicated legal, technical and political issues, in order to eliminate all the obstacles which had arisen over the last 27 years. It was, however, vital that a firm commitment should be made at the Conference to continue talks on the question of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

45. Mr. ERDOS (Hungary) said that the 1963 Treaty was the first practical step to curb nuclear testing. It had, however, proved ineffective. The figure of over 1,300 nuclear-test explosions since the signing of the Treaty spoke for itself.

46. His country had always consistently called for a ban on all nuclear explosions in all environments. A treaty on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban would put an end to the continuous modernization of nuclear weapons, which fuelled the qualitative arms race. It would be instrumental in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and would strengthen the existing non-proliferation régime.

47. The current Conference could and should become an important landmark on the route to the conclusion of a Treaty on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban by creating and upholding a constructive dialogue and atmosphere for further practical steps in that direction in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva. All the nuclear-weapon States were represented at the Conference on Disarmament, and it was in that forum that they could make their contribution to the achievement of the desired goal. Further progress could be made to that end if the nuclear-weapon States were to decide to reduce the number and yield of their test explosions. It was also important at the current Conference to avoid any political, organizational or procedural decisions which might jeopardize or weaken the partial test-ban Treaty and the existing non-proliferation régime.

48. The toughest problem at talks on a nuclear-test ban was the problem of verification. The nuclear-weapon States which maintained that a comprehensive test ban was a long-term objective, to be preceded by substantial and verifiable arms reductions, also held the view that the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban Treaty required greatly improved verification capabilities. A completely new approach to the question of verification had emerged in recent years, with the result that verification of compliance with such a Treaty was no longer so much a political as a technical issue. In addition to seismic means of verification, it was possible to begin elaborating a complex and reliable system by which to verify a future Treaty, and interesting suggesions to that effect had been submitted in the course of the Conference.

49. His delegation was firmly convinced that with good will and flexibility towards the positions of other parties, it was possible to solve the problems relating to a comprehensive test ban.

50. Mr. GISLASON (Iceland) noted that the question of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban had long been high on the priority list of United Nations disarmament issues. The various treaties concluded in that area had had a considerable positive impact on international security and environmental protection. The remaining unresolved issue was that of underground nuclear explosions with yields of up to 150 kilotons.

(Mr. Gislason, Iceland)

51. In the context of the East-West arms race, the prevalent attitude was that a test ban would slow down the nuclear arms race and the development of nuclear weapons. With the end of the "cold war" and the introduction of deep cuts in arsenals of both conventional and nuclear weapons, the significance of a comprehensive test ban lay primarily in its capacity to strengthen the non-proliferation régime, which had significantly contributed to international stability and security. Given that the further proliferation of nuclear weapons was labelled as the main security challenge of the 1990s, his country considered the non-proliferation Treaty to be the single most important multilateral agreement on disarmament.

52. Technically speaking, a test ban might hold back the development of more sophisticated types of nuclear arms but would not prevent their production. On the other hand, a ban would put pressure on all States not to test nuclear weapons and might persuade the so-called "threshold" States to refrain from developing and acquiring such weapons, which would also curb the qualitative competition in nuclear weaponry.

53. A test ban would also facilitate provision of the necessary support for a substantial extension of the non-proliferation Treaty. However, despite the evident political relationship between non-proliferation and a comprehensive test ban, his country believed that a deliberate linkage of progress towards a comprehensive test ban to an extension and strengthening of the non-proliferation régime might endanger that régime and produce the opposite of the desired effect.

54. A ban would alleviate concerns about the environmental consequences of nuclear testing, which were a source of particular anxiety for peoples living in the far north.

55. The 1987 agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States to adopt a step-by-step approach and the specific results obtained on that basis appeared to show that, if an immediate test ban was not feasible, a phased approach would certainly be preferable to a standstill.

56. In that connection, his country suggested that, in addition to limiting the number of tests and the yield of permitted explosions, consideration might also be given to the question of test areas and the possibility of excluding such tests in the vicinity of densely populated and ecologically vulnerable areas.

57. If it were to prove possible to convert the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test ban, amendments must be adopted by consensus. His delegation hoped that the current Conference would give a political boost to the work of the Conference on Disarmament and thus contribute constructively towards the goal of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.